

**Amendments to Claims:**

**1 (Previously Presented).** A method comprising :

- (a) providing a database of rules;
- (b) applying an algorithm to the database to identify Almost-Exact Rules and Other Rules;
- (c) partitioning the database so that the Almost-Exact Rules are grouped into one or more groups;
- (d) partitioning the database so that the Other Rules are grouped in at least one separate group.

**2 (Previously Presented).** The method of Claim 1 further including using a Full Match search algorithm to test packets of data received from a network against the Almost-Exact rules in the one or more groups.

**3 (Previously Presented).** The method of claim 1 further including using a Software Managed Tree algorithm to test packets of data received from a network against the Other rules in the separate group.

**4 (Previously Presented).** The method of claim 1 further including using a Content-Addressable Memory (CAM) to test packets against the other rules in the separate group.

**5 (Currently Amended).** The method of claim 1 wherein the database of rules is being partitioned as a function of sub-fields within each rules rule.

**6 through 25 Canceled**

**26 (Previously Presented).** The method of claim 1 wherein each one of the Almost-Exact Rules includes a range of values on only one sub-field.

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27 (Currently Amended). The method of claim 1 wherein each one of the Almost-Exact Rules includes a wild card in only one component of the rule.

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